

Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce Provides Membership with Healthy Lifestyle Tools

Initiative in Brief

In 2005, the Grand Rapids Area Chamber's Health Care Committee assigned a task force to develop a multiphase communication and action plan that addresses the impact that obesity has on local businesses. Assisted by the strategies and recommendations outlined in *The Michigan Surgeon General's Prescription for a Healthier Michigan*, the Chamber's Obesity Taskforce developed several tools to help local businesses create a more productive, healthier, and happier workplace. The tools can be accessed at www.grandrapids.org/advocacy/healthcare-committee.htm.

One of the Chamber's premier tools is the *Resource Guide to "Healthy Business."* This guide contains a list of Chamber member businesses that offer wellness programs and related services. This guide not only saves time for employers, but also provides recognition to the Chamber members listed in the guide. As employers search for specific wellness programs for their employees, they can use the resource guide to find the one best suited for their worksite.

Other tools on the Chamber's website include documents that illustrate why obesity is a business issue, a worksheet to calculate the financial impact obesity has on an employer's bottom line, a public policy statement on obesity, and a document that introduces employers to the concepts of consumer driven health plans.

The Chamber recently demonstrated its commitment to employee wellness by hosting an internal walking program. Andy Johnston, program coordinator, used "incredible" to describe the teamwork and competitiveness demonstrated during the challenge. It's that teamwork and commitment to wellness that makes the Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce a wellness champion for Michigan business.

Benefits

Noted benefits of the program are:

- A healthier Michigan workforce – the tools help all businesses.
- Reduces health care costs. Statistics prove that 70 percent of illness can be prevented. Health also affects productivity.
- A healthier, happier workplace for employees.

The Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce is committed to helping local businesses create a more productive, healthier, and happier workplace.

Andy Johnston, program coordinator
Public Policy & Government Affairs Division
Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce

Lessons Learned

- No "one size fits all" program exists. Each employer has a unique employee population, and the employer must learn what will work best.
- The resources are effective in promoting worksite wellness.
- The *Resource Guide to "Healthy Business"* is another way to highlight members that are contributing to the promotion of wellness.

Contact Info: Andy Johnston
Title: Program Coordinator
Company: Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce
Phone: 616/771-0335
Email: johnstona@grandrapids.org

Cost: Online resources are free
Risk Factor: Obesity/physical inactivity
Impact/Reach: 2,800 Chamber member organizations
Business/Sector: All business types - 80% of members are small businesses